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AMAR CHITRA KATHA

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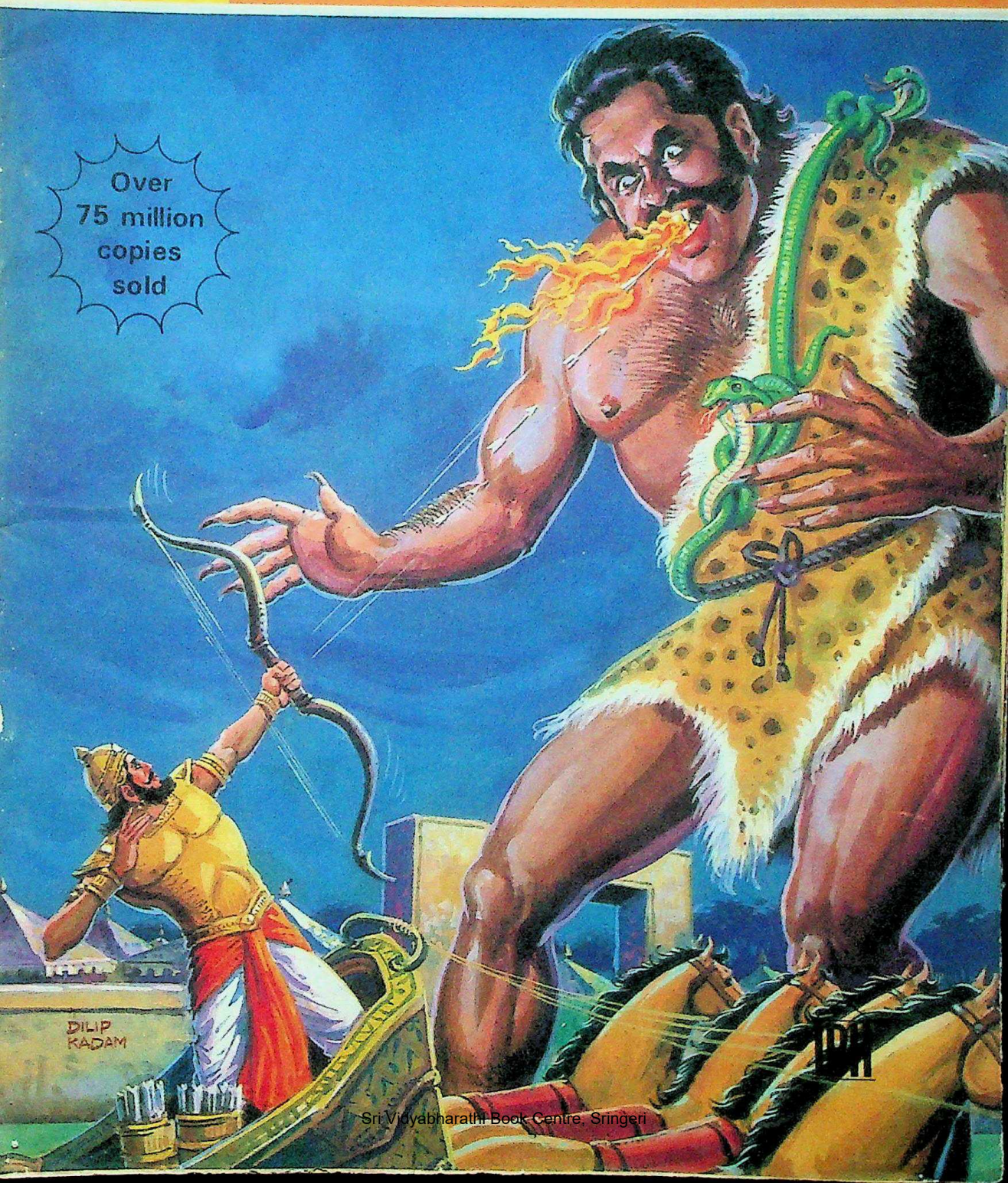
AFTER THE WAR

Mahabharata-39



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Amar Chitra Katha
No. 406 October 1, 1988

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MAHABHARATA 39

Veda Vyasa's epic on the Bharata race was first recited in public by his disciple Vaishampayana at the behest of the ageless seer Vyasa himself.

The recital took place in the august presence of King Janamejaya, a great grandson of Vyasa, and the many learned sages assembled for Janamejaya's Sarpa Satra (a 12-year-long snake sacrifice).

In the last session of our rendering of the Mahabharata, we saw the beginning of the end of the mighty war. Bheema fought the sons of Dhritarashtra and slew them one by one, until only Duryodhana remained. Unable to face the might of the Pandavas, Duryodhana fled the battlefield and concealed himself in a pool of water. Dared by the Pandavas to come out, he emerged and he and Bheema faced one another in single combat. They fought fiercely with their maces and in the end, Bheema broke Duryodhana's thighs with his mace and thus felled him.

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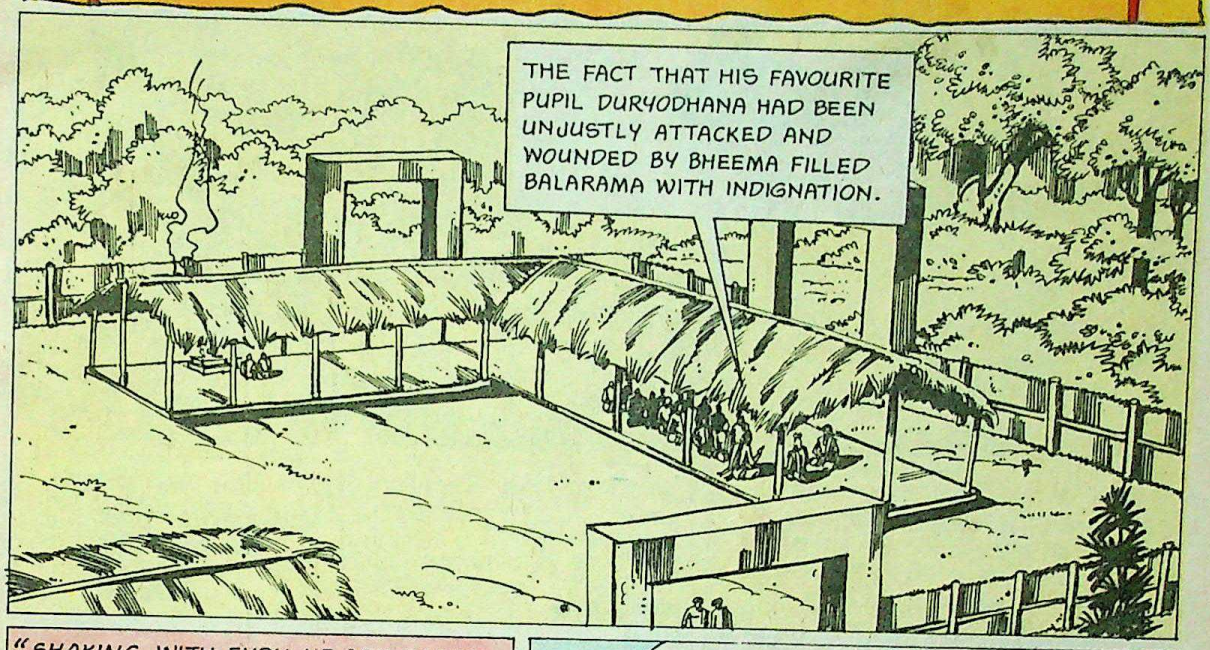

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"IN HIS RAGE, HE RUSHED AT BHEEMA WITH HIS PLOUGH* HELD ALOFT.

"KRISHNA TRIED TO RESTRAIN HIM.

THERE IS NO NEED FOR SUCH A DISPLAY OF ANGER AGAINST BHEEMA. REMEMBER HOW HE HAD VOWED TO CRUSH DURYODHANA'S THIGH WHEN DRAUPADI WAS DISGRACED?

YOU CANNOT TOLERATE THIS SINGLE OFFENCE. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN HOW THE KAURAVAS KILLED ABHIMANYU? COME, CALM YOURSELF, DEAR BROTHER.

"BALARAMA, HOWEVER, WOULD NOT BE PACIFIED.

I DECLARE BHEEMA'S CONDUCT IN THE WAR AS UNWORTHY OF A KSHATRIYA.

"BALARAMA ASCENDED HIS CHARIOT AND LEFT IN A HUFF.

* THE PLOUGH WAS BALARAMA'S PERSONAL WEAPON

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"DHRITARASHTRA INTERRUPTED SANJAYA'S NARRATION.

HOW DID THE OTHER PANDAVAS REACT TO BHEEMA'S ACT?

DELIRIOUS WITH JOY, THEY BLEW LUSTILY THE CONCH-SHELLS, AND BEAT THE DRUMS.

"THEY SHOWERED BHEEMA WITH WORDS OF PRAISE.

BRAVO! WHO BUT YOU COULD DEFEAT THAT VALIANT DURYODHANA.

OUR HAIR STILL STANDS ON END WITH THE EXCITEMENT OF THAT DUEL.

YOUR FAME WILL SPREAD IN THE WHOLE WORLD NOW.

"KRISHNA INTERVENED—

ENOUGH! LET US NOT TRY TO KILL AN ENEMY WHO IS ALREADY VANQUISHED. COME, SIT ON YOUR CHARIOTS AND RETURN TO THE CAMP. FORGET ABOUT THIS MAN. HE IS BUT A PIECE OF DRY WOOD NOW.

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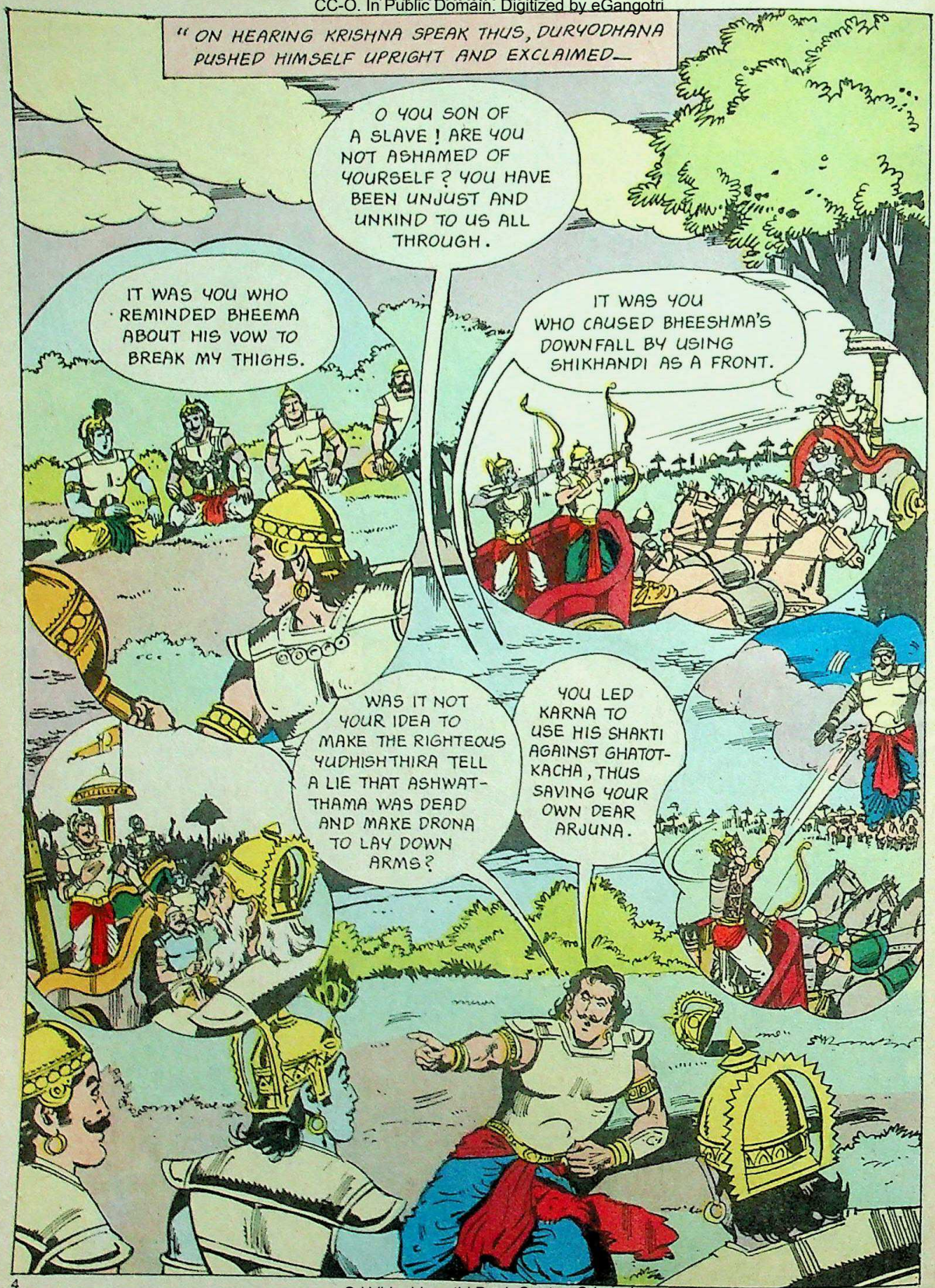

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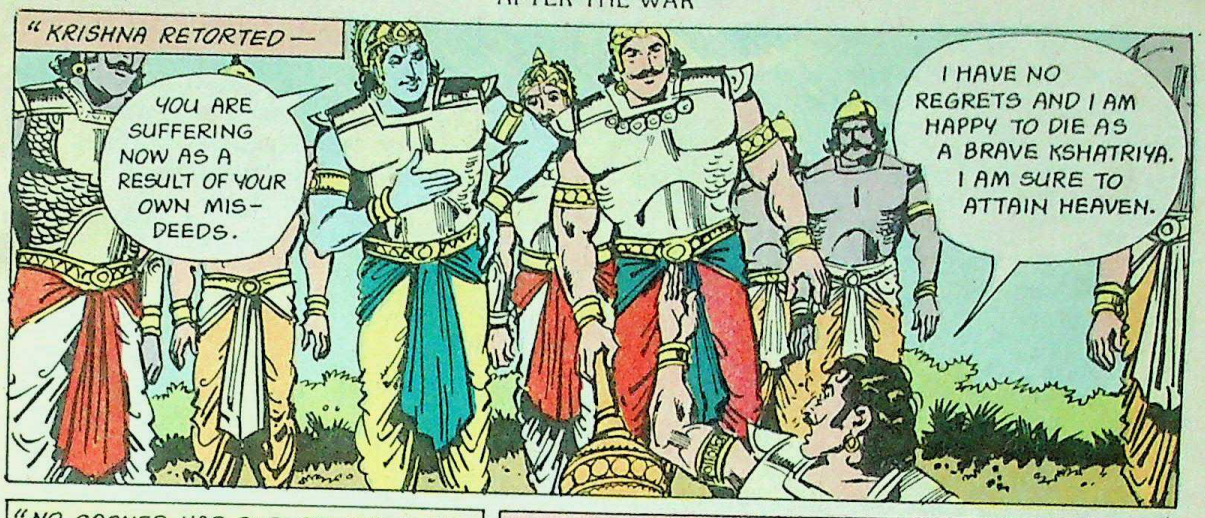

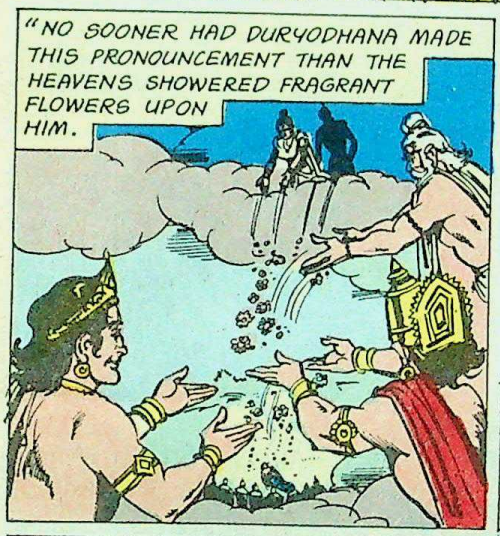

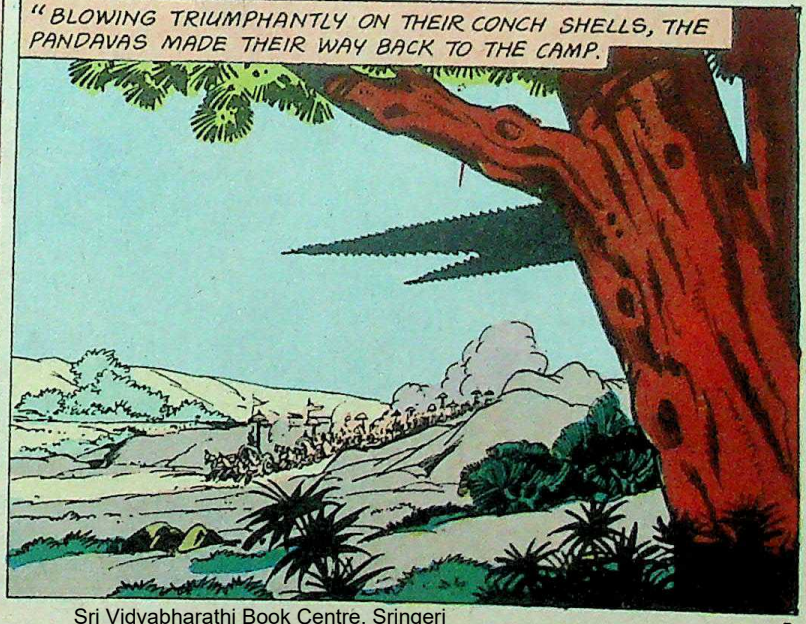

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"THEY FIRST WENT TO DURYODHANA'S QUARTERS, NOW DESERTED AND DESOLATE.

"THE OTHERS GOT DOWN FROM THEIR CHARIOTS. KRISHNA SAID TO ARJUNA —

REMOVE YOUR GANDEEVA AND THE CELESTIAL QUIVERS FROM THE CHARIOT AND COME DOWN.

"AS SOON AS KRISHNA DESCENDED FROM THE CHARIOT, THE MONKEY WHICH HAD ADORNED THE BANNER SO FAR SUDDENLY VANISHED.

"AND THE GREAT CHARIOT, WHICH HAD WITHSTOOD THE CELESTIAL WEAPONS OF DRONA AND KARNA, WENT UP IN FLAMES.

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"IN AN INSTANT THE ENTIRE CHARIOT INCLUDING THE HORSES AND REINS WAS REDUCED TO ASHES.

"WHILE THE REST OF THE PANDAVAS WATCHED THIS MIRACLE WITH AWE AND FEAR, ARJUNA FELL AT KRISHNA'S FEET.

O KRISHNA! HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? HOW COULD THE CHARIOT SUDDENLY BE BURNT DOWN?

"KRISHNA GENTLY EXPLAINED —

THIS CHARIOT HAD ALREADY BEEN BURNT AND CHARRED BY THE REPEATED ONSLAUGHT OF THE ENEMY'S WEAPONS. BUT AS LONG AS I SAT IN IT, IT APPEARED TO BE INTACT.

NOW THAT YOUR MIGHTY TASK IS COMPLETED, I HAVE ABANDONED IT. SO THE CHARIOT IS NOW A HEAP OF ASHES.

"SMILING, KRISHNA THEN EMBRACED YUDHISHTHIRA AND SAID —

IT IS FORTUNATE THAT YOU HAVE EMERGED VICTORIOUS IN THIS WAR. REMEMBER HOW YOU HAD ASKED ME TO PROTECT ARJUNA? HERE HE HAS EMERGED UNSCATHED FROM THE TERRIBLE WAR AND IS SAFE AND SOUND WITH ALL HIS BROTHERS.

IT IS BY YOUR GRACE, O LORD, THAT WE HAVE WON THIS WAR.

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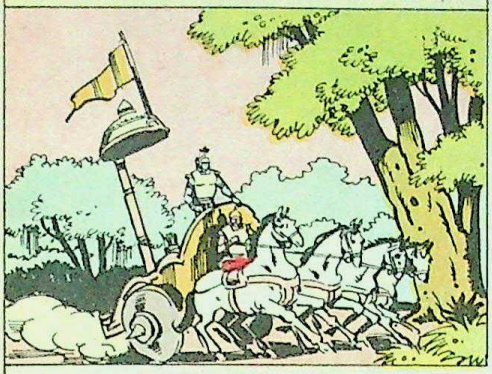
"KRISHNA READILY AGREED AND LEFT FOR HASTINAPURA ON HIS CHARIOT.

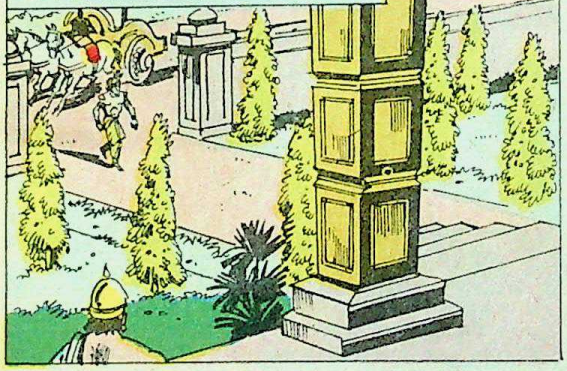


JANAMEJAYA INTERRUPTED VAISHAMPAYANA —

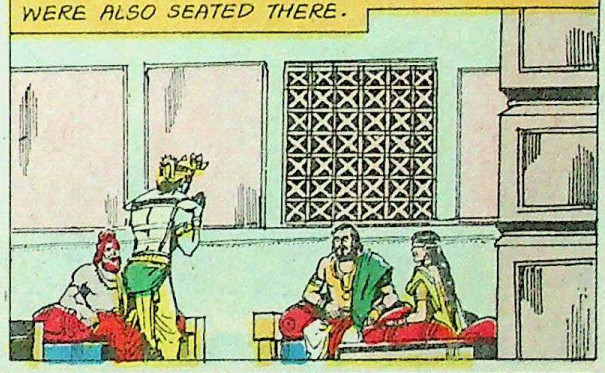
WAS IT NECESSARY TO SEND KRISHNA FOR THIS TASK ?

YES, IT WAS. YUDHISHTHIRA REALISED HOW GANDHARI WOULD HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE NEWS OF THE DEATH OF HER SONS. UNASSUAGED, THAT VIRTUOUS WOMAN'S ANGER COULD ANNIHILATE THE WHOLE WORLD. THAT IS WHY YUDHISHTHIRA REQUESTED THE LORD HIMSELF TO RUSH TO HASTINAPURA AND SAVE THE SITUATION.

"ON REACHING HASTINAPURA, KRISHNA WENT TO DHRITARASHTRA'S PALACE.

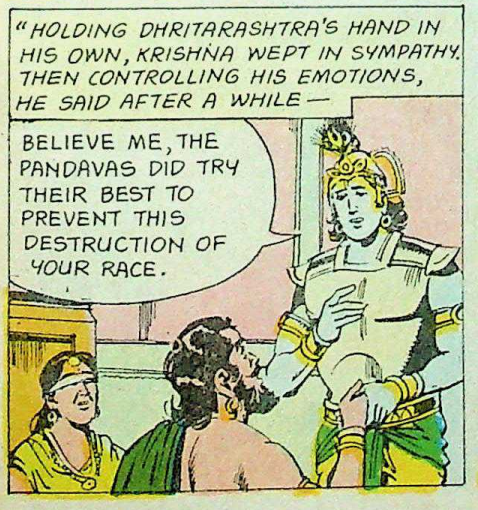


"BOWING RESPECTFULLY TO THE AGED KING, HE GREETED SAGE VYASA AND GANDHARI WHO WERE ALSO SEATED THERE.



"HOLDING DHRITARASHTRA'S HAND IN HIS OWN, KRISHNA WEPT IN SYMPATHY. THEN CONTROLLING HIS EMOTIONS, HE SAID AFTER A WHILE —

BELIEVE ME, THE PANDAVAS DID TRY THEIR BEST TO PREVENT THIS DESTRUCTION OF YOUR RACE.



THEY BORE ALL THE INSULTS HEAPED ON THEM BY THE KAURAVAS AND SPENT SO MANY YEARS IN THE FOREST.

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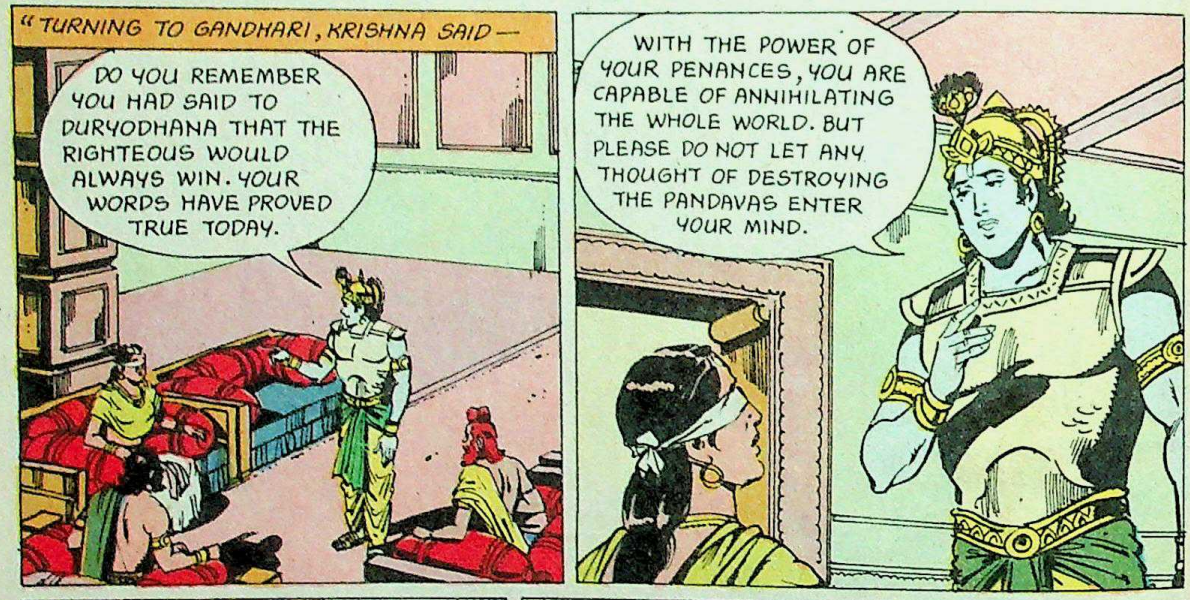

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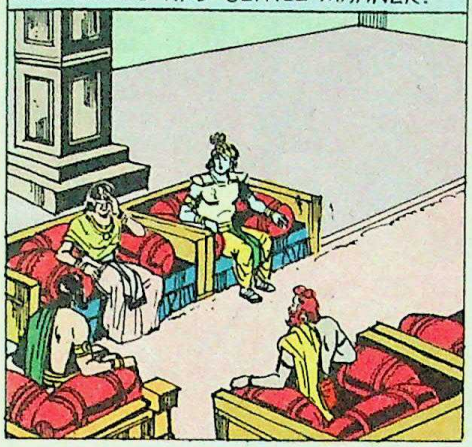
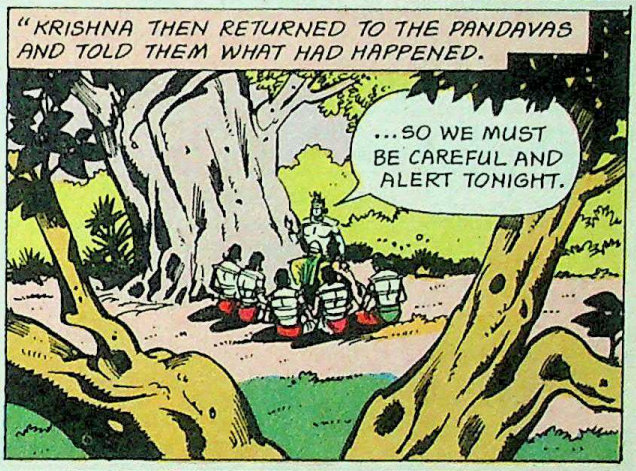
"KRISHNA SAT FOR A WHILE TRYING TO CONSOLE THE AGED KING AND THE DESOLATE MOTHER WITH HIS SOOTHING WORDS AND GENTLE MANNER.



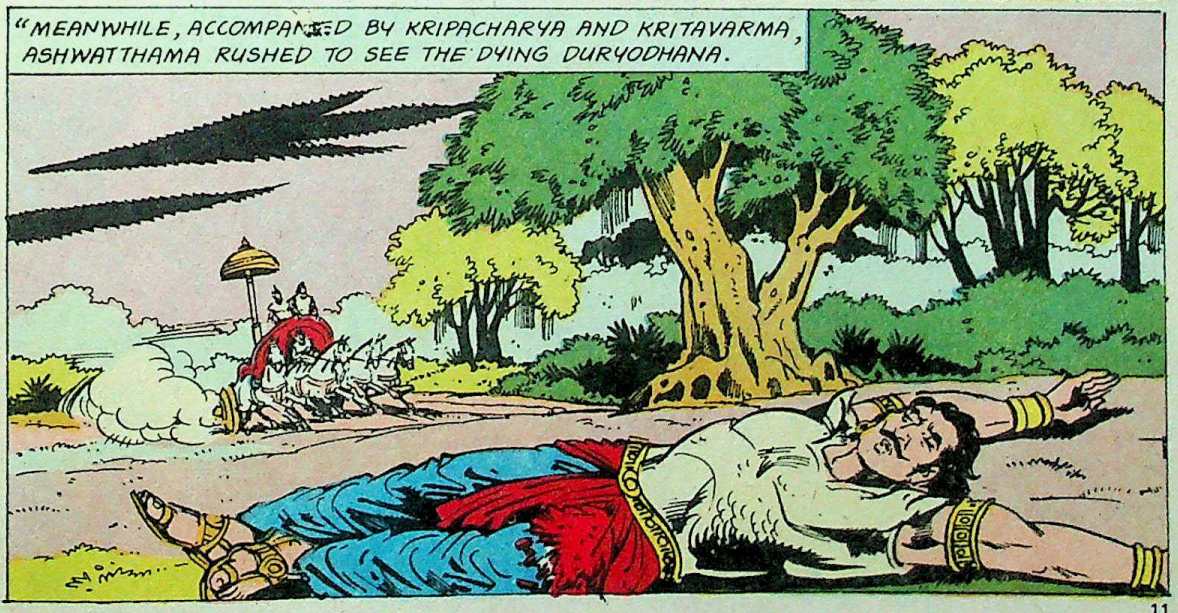
"JUST THEN, HE DIVINED THE EVIL PLOT EVOLVING IN ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND. STANDING UP WITH A START, HE SAID TO SAGE VYASA.

"BOTH GANDHARI AND DHRITARASHTRA ASKED HIM TO GO.

"KRISHNA THEN RETURNED TO THE PANDAVAS AND TOLD THEM WHAT HAD HAPPENED.



"MEANWHILE, ACCOMPANIED BY KRIPACHARYA AND KRITAVARMA, ASHWATTHAMA RUSHED TO SEE THE DYING DURYODHANA.



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"THEY FOUND DURYODHANA BLEEDING PROFUSELY AND TOSSING AND TURNING HELPLESSLY IN AGONY.

QUICKLY THEY GOT OFF FROM THE CHARIOT AND SAT BESIDE HIM.

"ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THE KING IN THIS PATHETIC STATE. WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES, HE SAID—

OH! WHAT IS THIS WORLD WHERE A KING OF YOUR MIGHT AND STATURE CAN BE LEFT TO ROLL IN THE DUST.

WHERE IS YOUR GREAT ARMY, YOUR ROYAL UMBRELLA, YOUR POMP AND VALOUR? SURELY NOTHING IN THE WORLD CAN BE RELIED UPON. IT IS TRANSIENT AND EPHEMERAL.

"DURYODHANA TOO BROKE DOWN AT ASHWATTHAMA'S DISPLAY OF SORROW.

EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD IS DESTINED FOR DESTRUCTION. APPARENTLY MY MOMENT OF DOOM HAS ALSO COME. HENCE YOU FIND ME IN THIS STATE.

YET I AM HAPPY THAT NEVER ONCE DID I TURN MY BACK IN WAR. IT WAS ONLY BY CHEATING THAT THE ENEMY COULD DESTROY ME. I HAVE BEEN TRUE TO MY DUTY AS A KSHATRIYA. SO DO NOT GRIEVE FOR ME, FRIENDS.

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"THE TEARS IN DURYODHANA'S EYES FILLED ASHWATTHAMA WITH RAGE.

EVEN MY FATHER'S DEATH BROUGHT ABOUT BY DECEIT DID NOT HURT ME AS MUCH AS YOUR DESTRUCTION AT THE HANDS OF THOSE WICKED PANDAVAS...

"CLENCHING HIS FISTS HE SAID—

...I SWEAR TO YOU BY EVERYTHING SACRED THAT I WILL SEND ALL THE PANCHALAS AND THE PANDAVAS TO DEATH TONIGHT. GIVE ME YOUR PERMISSION TO DO SO.

"DURYODHANA WAS TOUCHED. ADDRESSING KRIPA, HE SAID—

ACHARYA, PLEASE BRING WATER IN A VESSEL.

"WHEN KRIPACHARYA DID SO, DURYODHANA SAID FORMALLY—

I REQUEST YOU TO INSTALL ASHWATTHAMA AS THE COMMANDER OF OUR ARMY.

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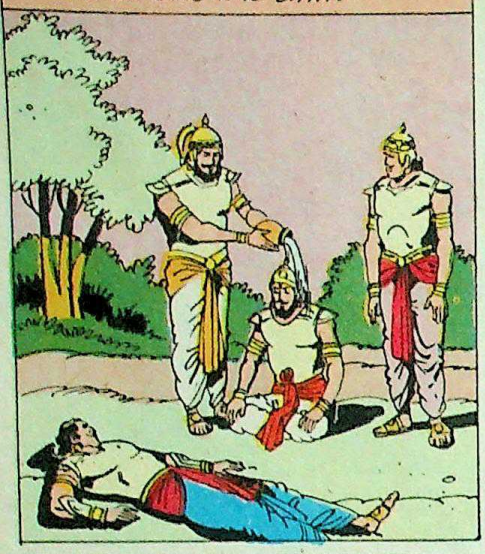
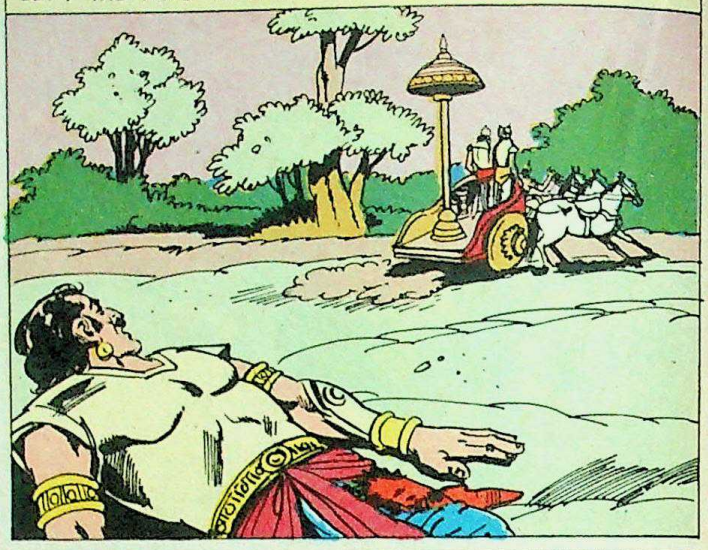
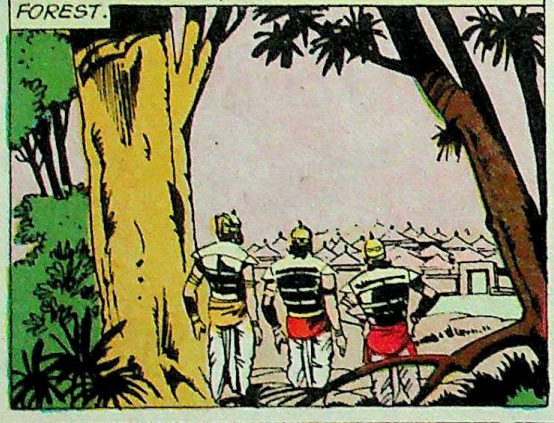
"KRIPACHARYA POURED THE WATER OVER ASHWATTHAMA AS A RITUAL OF THE CEREMONIAL BATH.



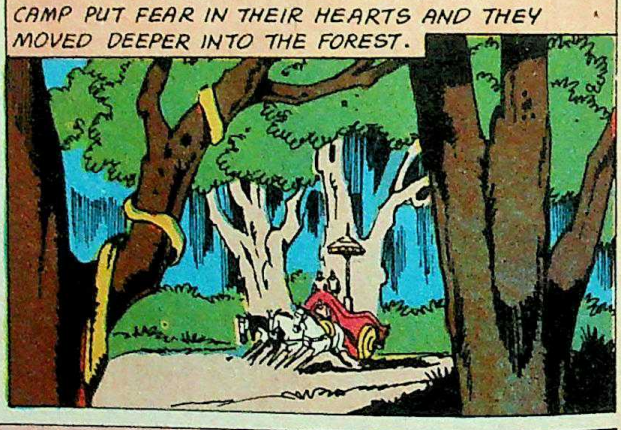
"ASHWATTHAMA EMBRACED THE PROSTRATE DURYODHANA IN FAREWELL AND THE THREE WARRIORS LEFT THE KING TO SPEND THE DARK NIGHT ALONE.



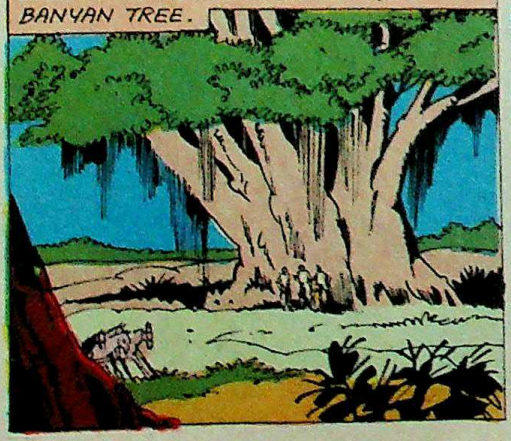
"SOON THEY SIGHTED THE CAMP, BUT WARY OF THE PANDAVAS, THEY HALTED IN A NEARBY FOREST.



"THEY RESTED FOR A WHILE. SOON THE JOYOUS SOUNDS OF CELEBRATION FROM THE PANDAVA CAMP PUT FEAR IN THEIR HEARTS AND THEY MOVED DEEPER INTO THE FOREST.



"SAFE IN THE HEART OF THE FOREST, THEY REFRESHED THEIR HORSES AND DECIDED TO REST UNDER A SPREADING BANYAN TREE.



"WEARY AND WOUNDED, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA FELL ASLEEP AS SOON AS THEY LAY DOWN. BUT ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT.

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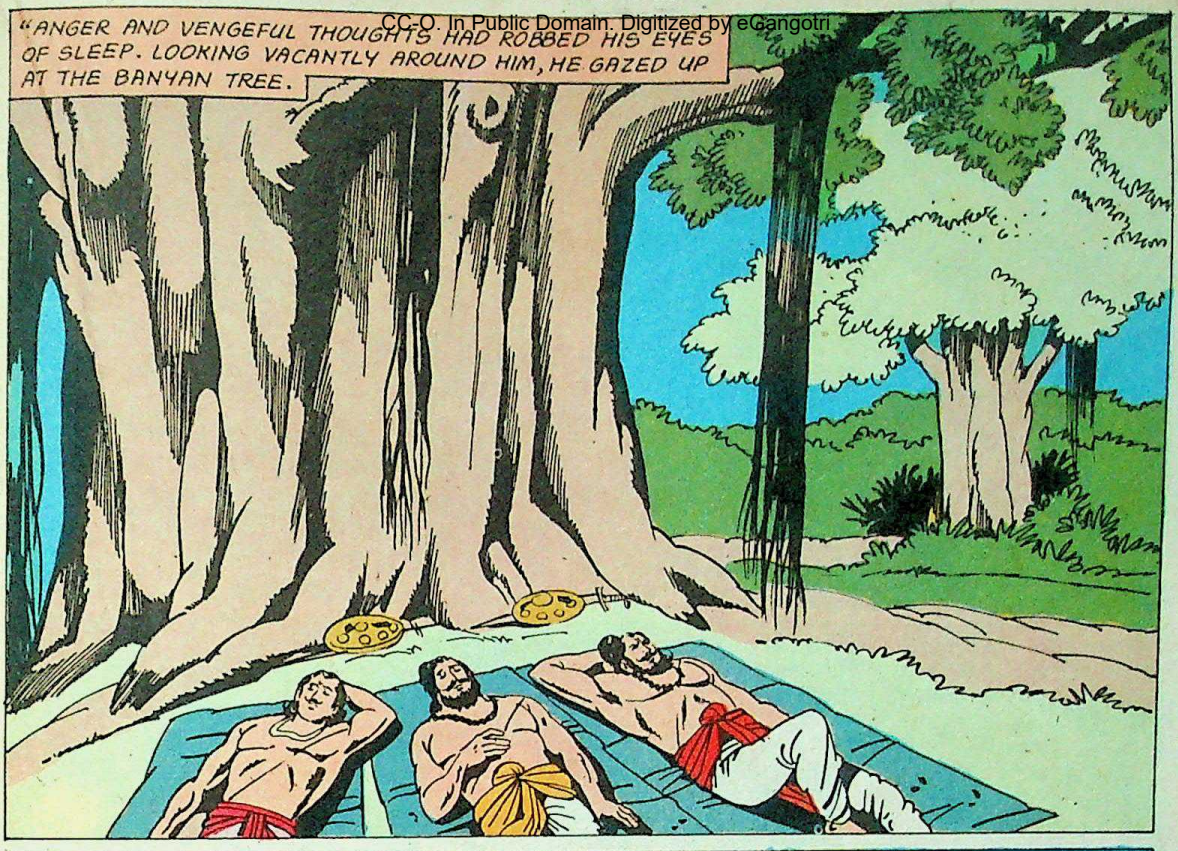

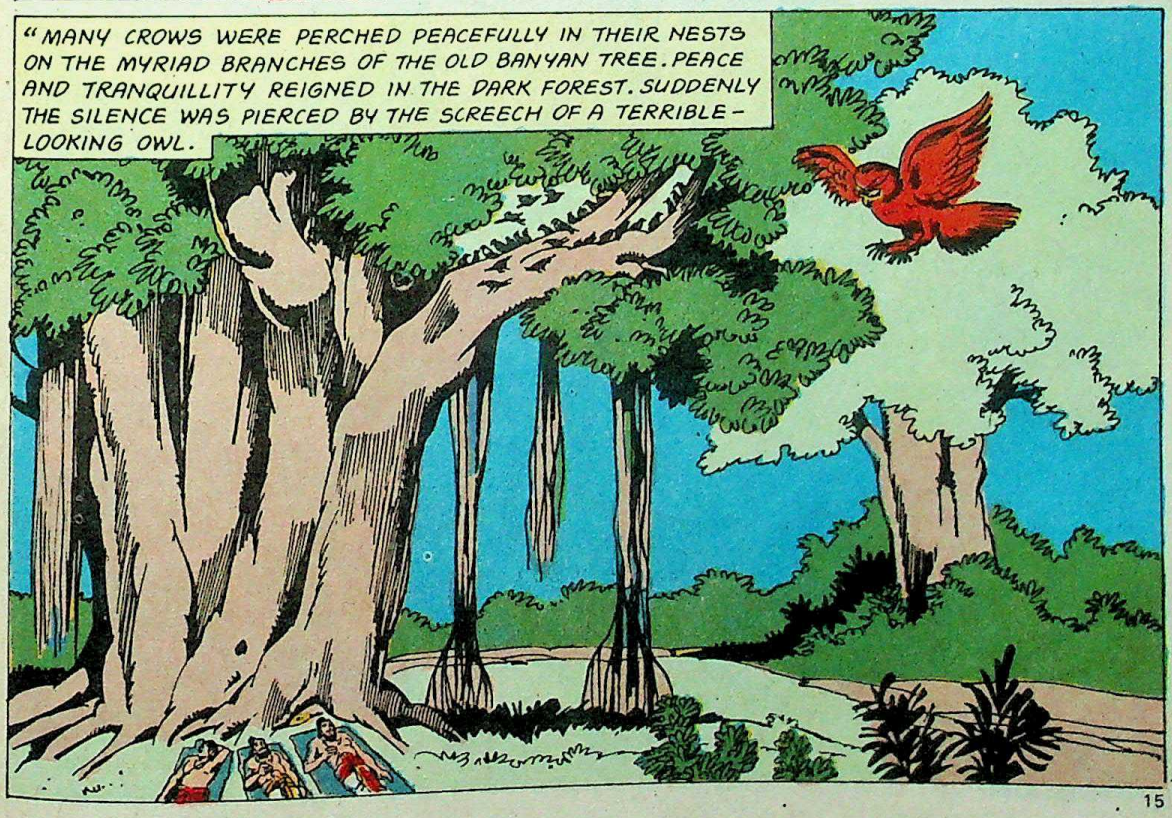

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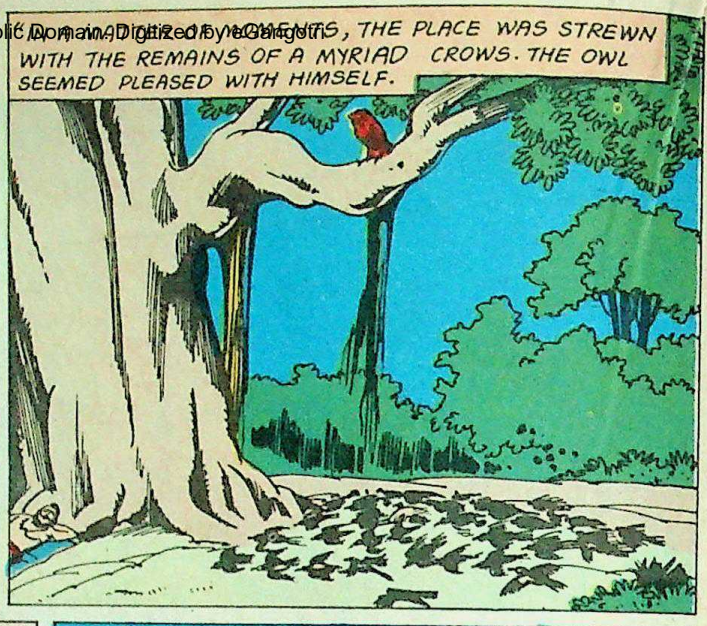
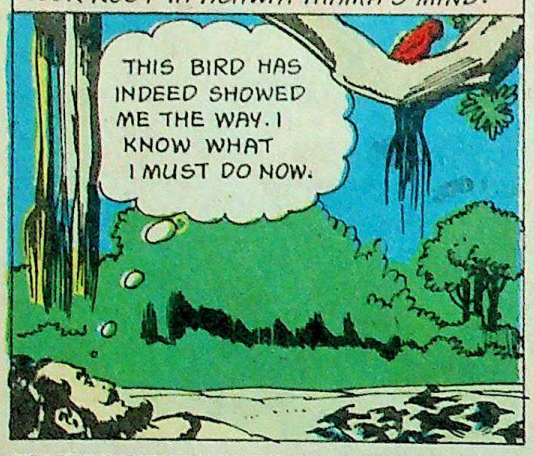
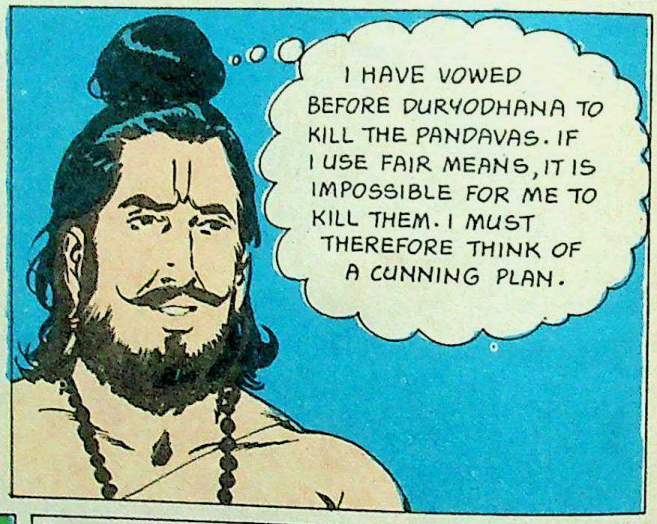
"HE SWEPT DOWN ON THE SLEEPING CROWS AND ATTACKED THEM WITHOUT MERCY.

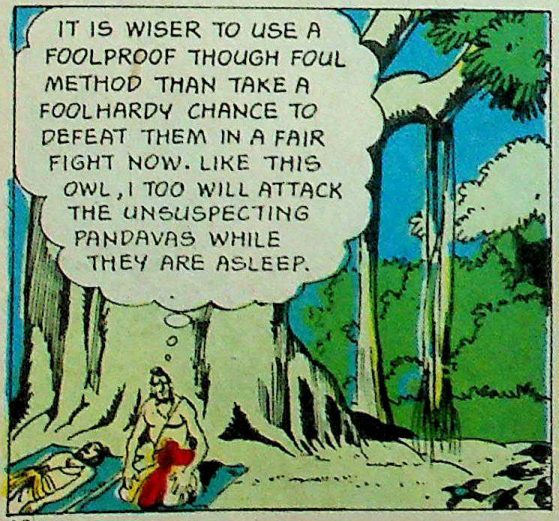
"IN A FEW MOMENTS, THE PLACE WAS STREWN WITH THE REMAINS OF A MYRIAD CROWS. THE OWL SEEMED PLEASED WITH HIMSELF.



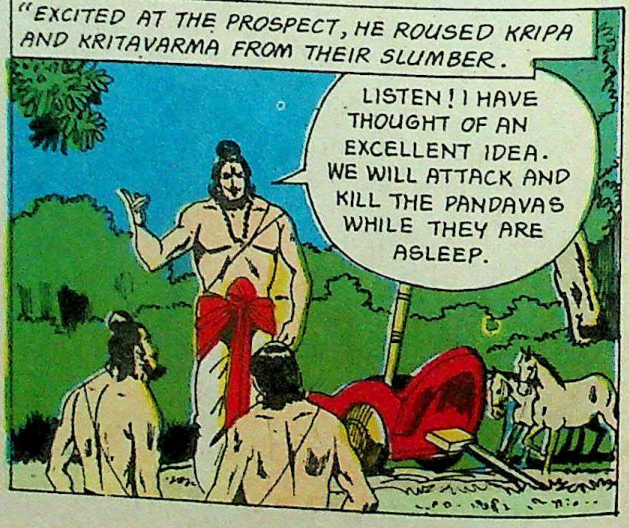
"WATCHING THIS FROM BELOW, AN IDEA TOOK ROOT IN ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND.







"EXCITED AT THE PROSPECT, HE ROUSED KRIPA AND KRITAVARMA FROM THEIR SLUMBER.



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"HORRIFIED AT HIS SUGGESTION, THEY GAZED AT HIM SPEECHLESS WITH SHOCK. ASHWATTHAMA SAID—

A MIGHTY RULER OF ELEVEN AKSHAUHINIS LIES IN THE DUST. ONLY THREE OF US NOW REMAIN FROM THAT ARMY. WHAT DO YOU THINK WE CAN DO NOW TO SET MATTERS RIGHT?

"KRIPACHARYA TRIED TO COUNSEL THE EXCITED ASHWATTHAMA.

VALOUR AND VIRTUE ARE BOTH ESSENTIAL FOR A MAN. IT IS FUTILE MERELY TO THINK OF A GOOD DEED WITHOUT TAKING ANY ACTION. IT IS EQUALLY FOOLISH TO PLUNGE INTO ACTIVITY WITHOUT ANY CONSIDERATION OF RIGHT AND WRONG.

DURYODHANA WAS GREEDY AND ILL-ADVISED. CRUEL AND IMPATIENT, HE REFUSED TO LISTEN TO WELL-MEANING FRIENDS AND MADE ENEMIES OF THE PANDAVAS. WE FOLLOWED HIM AND HAVE REACHED THIS SORRY STATE.

MY OWN MIND NOW REFUSES TO FUNCTION. LET US NOW GO TO DHRITARASHTRA, GANDHARI AND VIDURA AND SEEK THEIR COUNSEL. THEY WILL SURELY GUIDE US PROPERLY.

"ASHWATTHAMA COULD NOT DENY THE WISDOM OF THE ACHARYA'S WORDS. YET HE WAS ADAMANT.

EVERYONE OF US FEELS CONVINCED THAT HIS WAY OF THINKING IS THE ONLY RIGHT AND PROPER ONE. I HAVE MADE UP MY MIND AND I WILL ACT ACCORDINGLY.

THE PANDAVAS WILL BE SLEEPING PEACEFULLY WITH THEIR ARMOURS CAST OFF. ONLY AFTER I HAVE KILLED ALL OF THEM WILL I FEEL I HAVE AVENGED THE DEATH OF MY FATHER.

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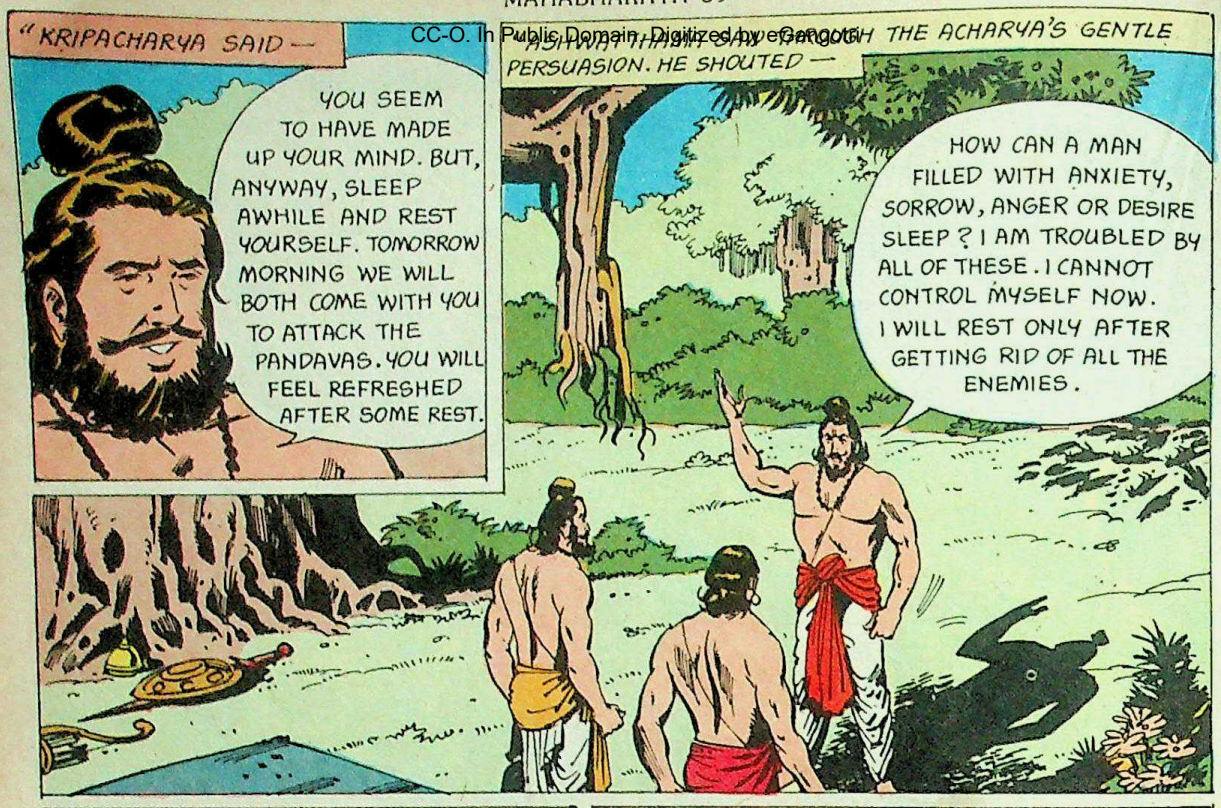

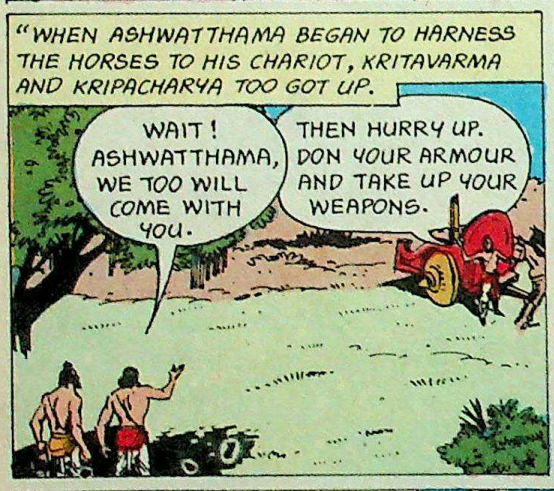

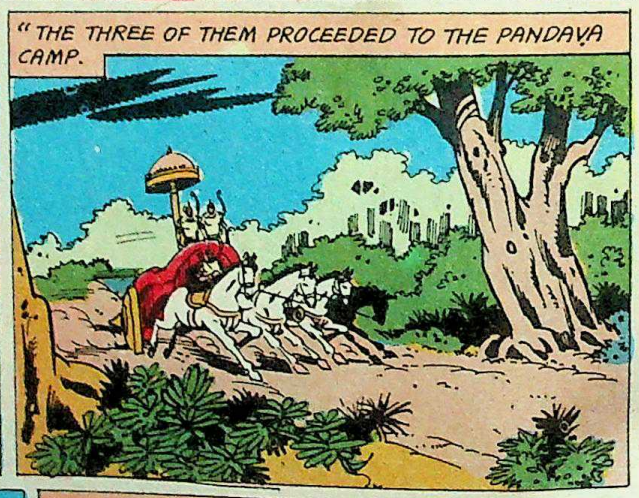

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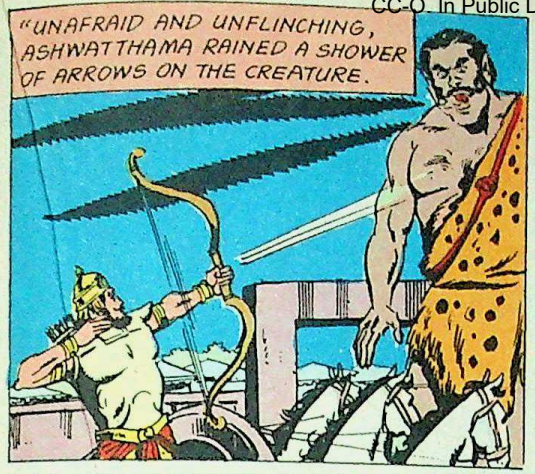

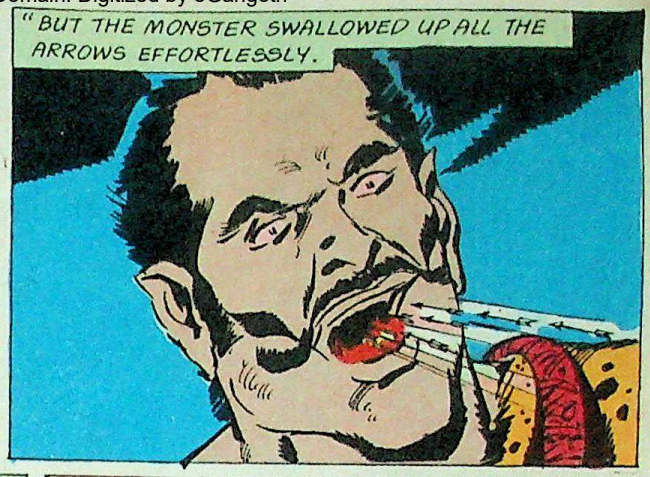

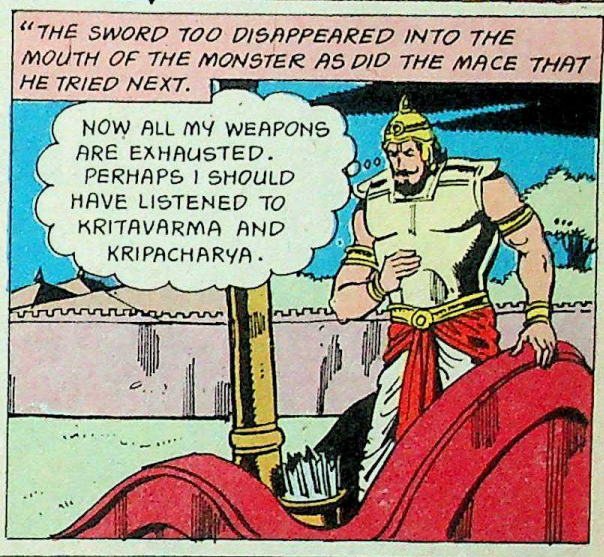

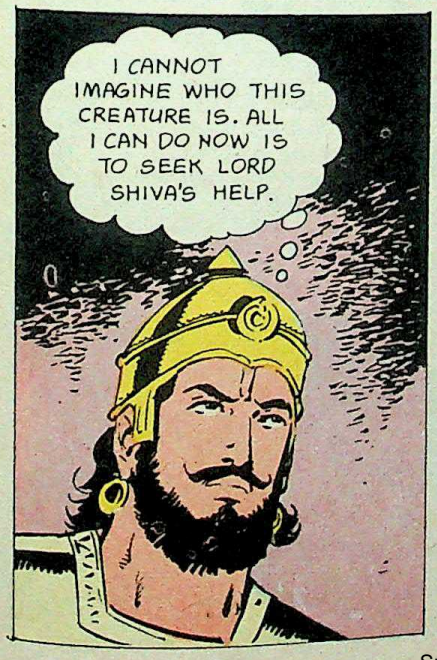

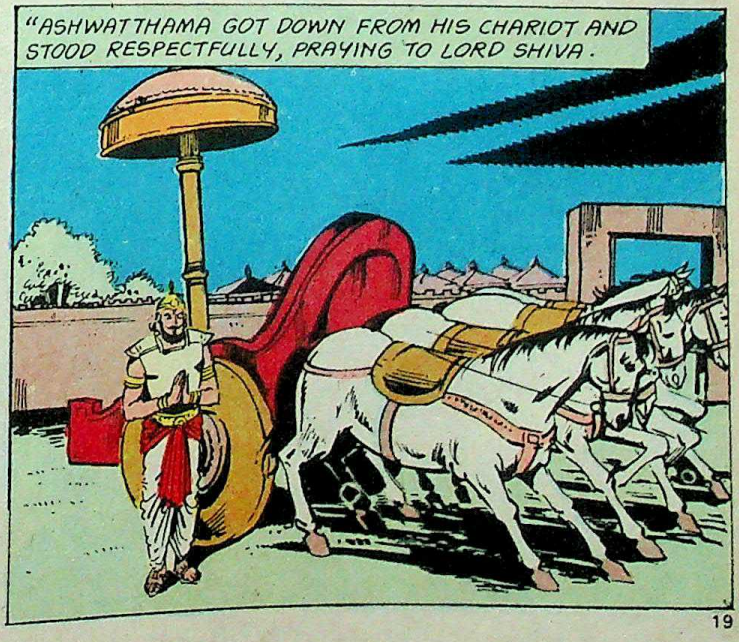

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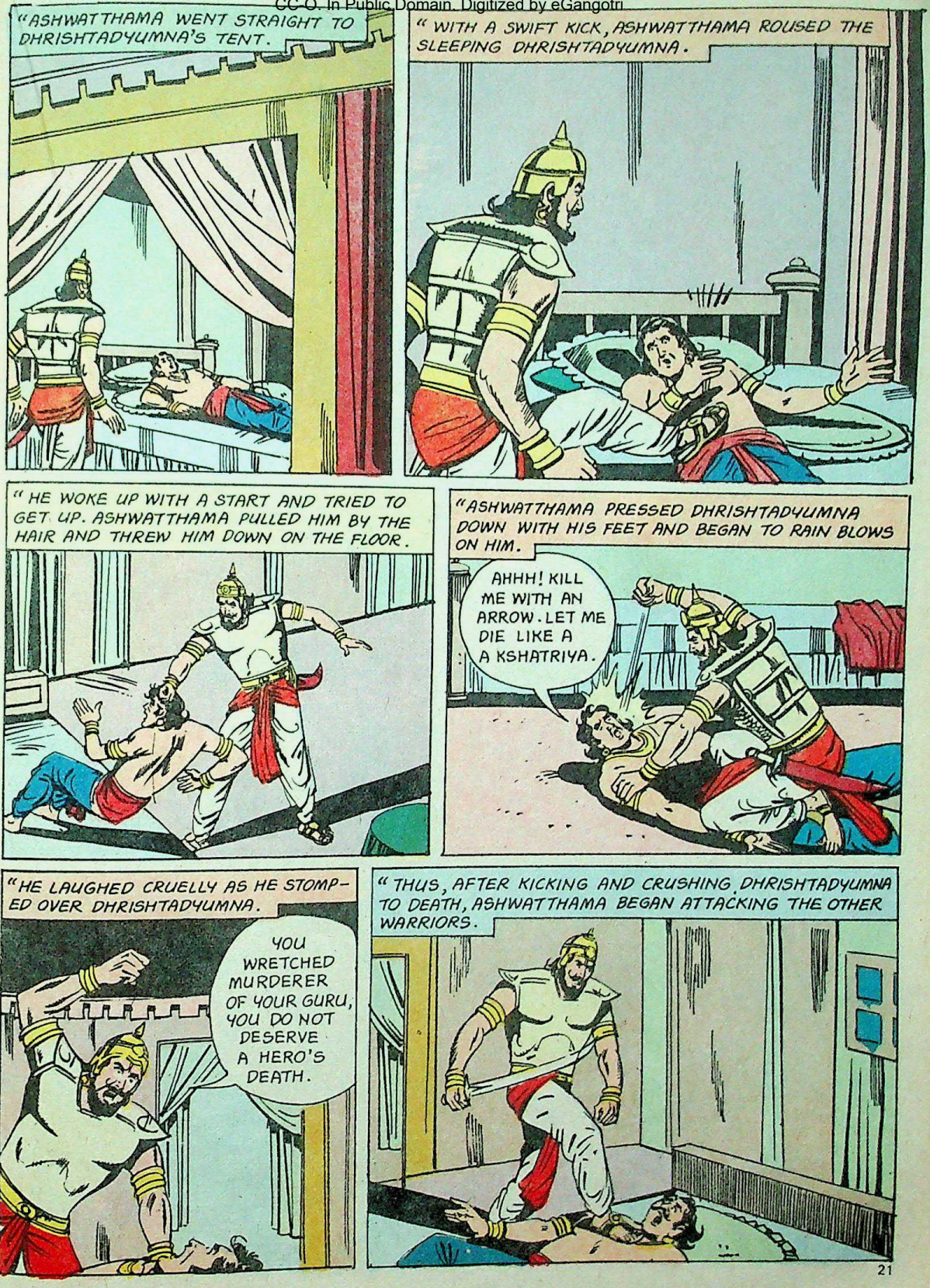

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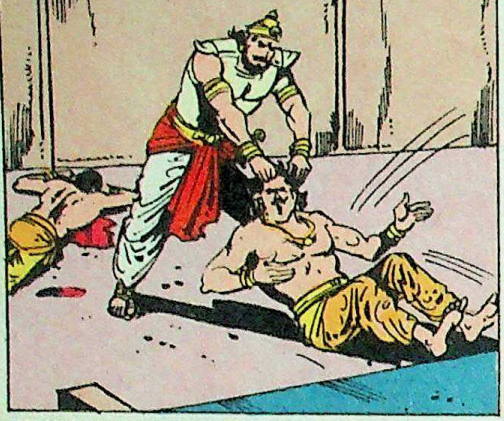
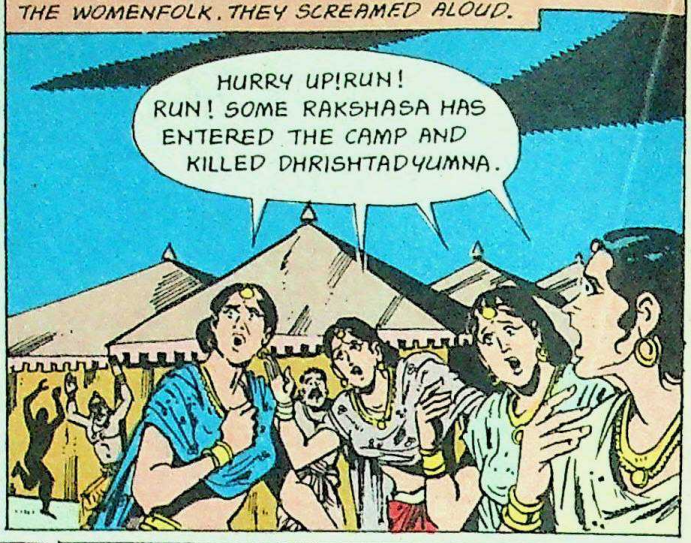
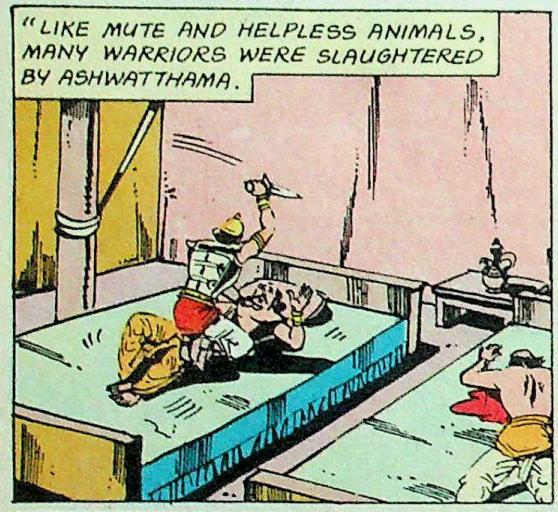
"THE SAME CRUEL PROCESS WAS REPEATED OVER AND OVER AGAIN.



"THE CRY OF THE VICTIMS WOKE UP THE GUARDS AND THE WOMENFOLK. THEY SCREAMED ALOUD.

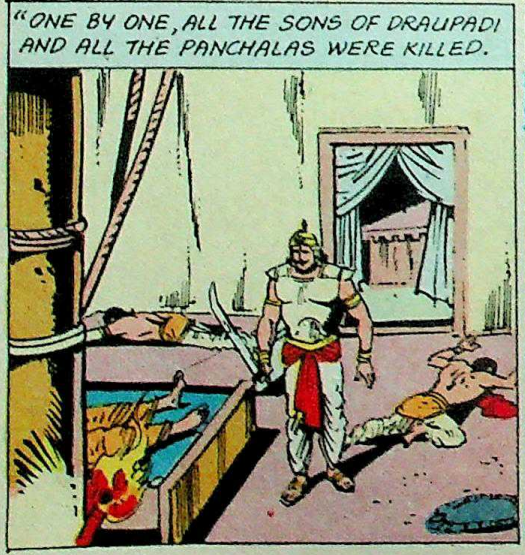


"LIKE MUTE AND HELPLESS ANIMALS, MANY WARRIORS WERE SLAUGHTERED BY ASHWATTHAMA.

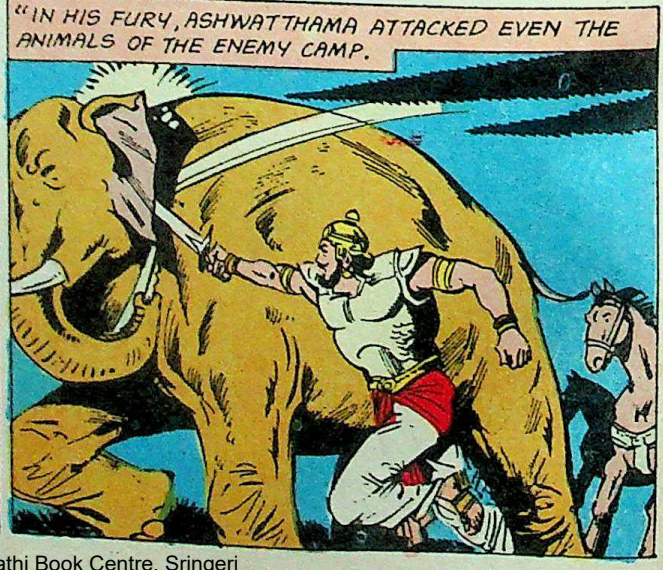


"SOON SHIKHANDI AND THE OTHER WARRIORS, WHO HAD EARLIER ESCAPED THE MIGHTY BATTLE UNSCATHED, WERE KILLED WHILE STILL HALF ASLEEP.

"ONE BY ONE, ALL THE SONS OF DRAUPADI AND ALL THE PANCHALAS WERE KILLED.



"IN HIS FURY, ASHWATTHAMA ATTACKED EVEN THE ANIMALS OF THE ENEMY CAMP.



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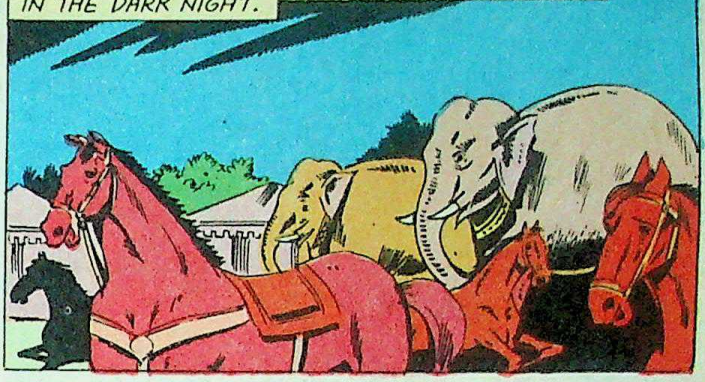
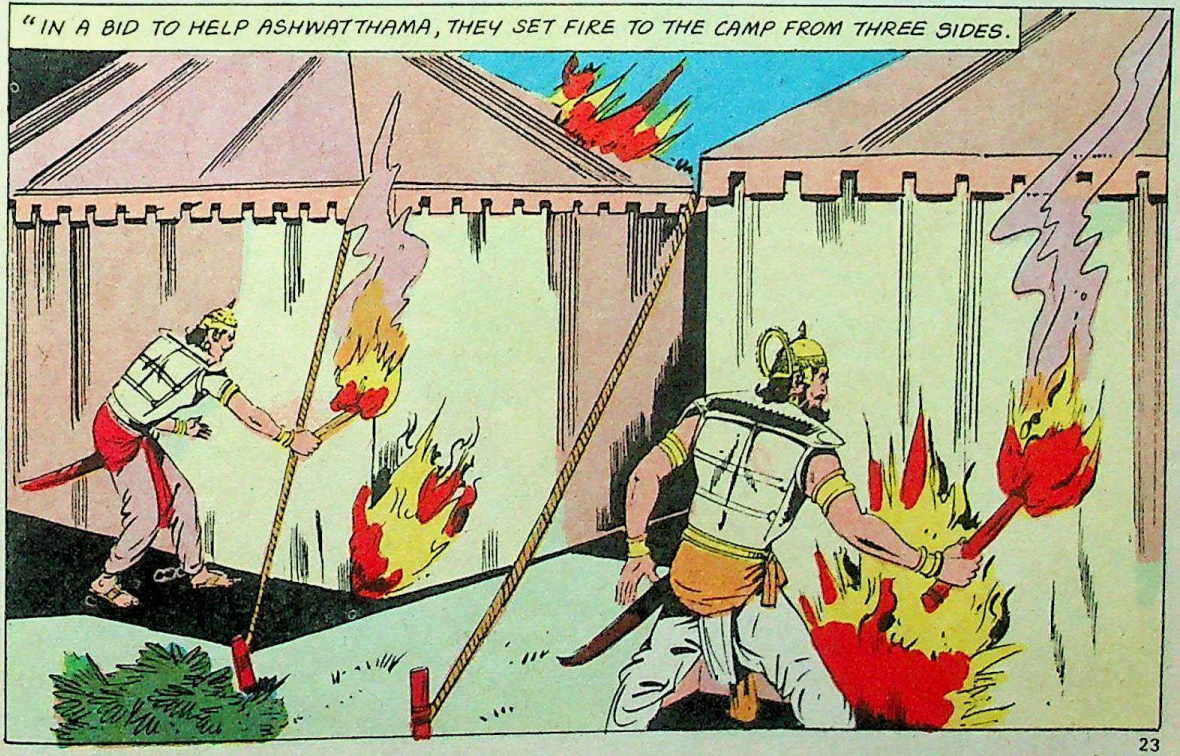
"ASHWATTHAMA WAS LIKE DEATH INCARNATE, RUNNING HITHER AND THITHER, SWORD IN HAND.

"THE SOLDIERS WHO ESCAPED HIS FURY WERE CRUSHED UNDER THE ANIMALS WHO RAN AMOK IN THE DARK NIGHT.



"SLEEPY AND CONFUSED WITH FEAR, SOME SOLDIERS TRIED TO RUN OUT OF THE CAMP. BUT KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA WERE READY TO CATCH THEM.

"IN A BID TO HELP ASHWATTHAMA, THEY SET FIRE TO THE CAMP FROM THREE SIDES.



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"IN THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF THE RAGING FIRE ASHWATTHAMA MANAGED TO DESTROY THE ENTIRE ARMY...

...SO THAT WHEN HE EMERGED AT DAYBREAK AFTER THE MASSACRE, THE CAMP LAY AS SILENT AS IT HAD BEEN WHEN HE HAD ENTERED IT EARLIER IN THE NIGHT.

"ASHWATTHAMA, KRITAVARMA AND KRIPACHARYA PIERCED THE SILENCE OF THE NIGHT WITH THEIR CRIES OF REJOICING.

WE HAVE DONE IT! WE HAVE FINISHED OUR TASK.

COME, LET US HURRY TO KING DURYODHANA WITH THE GOOD NEWS.

"WHEN THEY REACHED DURYODHANA, THEY FOUND HIM BARELY BREATHING.

"ASHWATTHAMA WIPED THE BLOOD SPOUTING FROM DURYODHANA'S MOUTH AND SAID —

LISTEN, O KING! ALL THE PANCHALAS AND ALL THE SONS OF DRAUPADI ARE DEAD. I HAVE KILLED THAT WICKED DHRISHTA-DYUMNA TOO.

NOW ONLY THE FIVE PANDAVAS, KRISHNA AND SATYAKI REMAIN AMONG THE PANDAVAS, AND THE THREE OF US FROM OUR ARMY.

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"THE NEWS REVIVED DURYODHANA LONG ENOUGH TO SAY —

ASHWATTHAMA! YOU HAVE DONE FOR ME WHAT BHEESHMA, DRONA OR KARNA COULD NOT DO. BLESS YOU! NOW WE WILL ALL MEET IN HEAVEN.

"WITH THESE WORDS, DURYODHANA BREATHED HIS LAST. THE MIGHTY WARRIOR WHO HAD BEEN THE FIRST TO ENTER THE BATTLEFIELD WAS AMONG THE LAST TO DIE.

"BRIEFLY EMBRACING THE DEPARTED KING DURYODHANA THE THREE WARRIORS LEFT THE PLACE.

"VAISHAMPAYANA CONTINUED HIS NARRATION —

WHEN SANJAYA HEARD THE NEWS OF DURYODHANA'S DEATH, HE LOST THE POWER OF THE DIVINE VISION BESTOWED ON HIM BY SAGE VYASA. MEANWHILE, DHRISHTADYUMNA'S CHARIOTEER HAD SOMEHOW ESCAPED THE MASSACRE AND RUSHED TO YUDHISHTHIRA WITH THE TERRIBLE NEWS.

"RELATING THE GRUESOME DETAILS OF THE MIDNIGHT MASSACRE, HE SAID—

O KING, I ALONE ESCAPED WHILE YOUR ENTIRE ARMY HAS BEEN DESTROYED.

"YUDHISHTHIRA FAINTED WITH SHOCK. SATYAKI CAUGHT HIM AS HE FELL.

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"ON RECOVERING, YUDHISHTHIRA LAMENTED ALOUD—

ALAS! I HAVE LOST ALL AFTER WINNING THE WAR. MY WARRIORS WHO HAD ESCAPED THE ARROWS OF THE MIGHTY KARNA AND DRONA HAVE BEEN KILLED BY THEIR OWN CARELESSNESS.

"AFTER SENDING NAKULA TO FETCH DRAUPADI, YUDHISHTHIRA SORROWFULLY WENT TO HIS CAMP WITH HIS OTHER BROTHERS.

"HE COULD NOT BEAR TO SEE THAT AWFUL SIGHT AND, CRYING INCONSOLABLY FELL DOWN IN A SWOON.

"EVEN AS THE OTHER PANDAVAS TRIED TO CONSOLE HIM, NAKULA ARRIVED ON THE SCENE WITH DRAUPADI.

"AGITATED AS SHE WAS WITH THE NEWS, THE SCENE OF MASSACRE WAS TOO TRAGIC A SIGHT FOR HER. BHEEMA CAUGHT HER JUST IN TIME AS SHE FAINTED.

"WHEN SHE RECOVERED A LITTLE, SHE GLARED AT YUDHISHTHIRA, AND SAID—

SHOULD I CONGRATULATE YOU ON CONQUERING THE EARTH AFTER SACRIFICING YOUR SONS?

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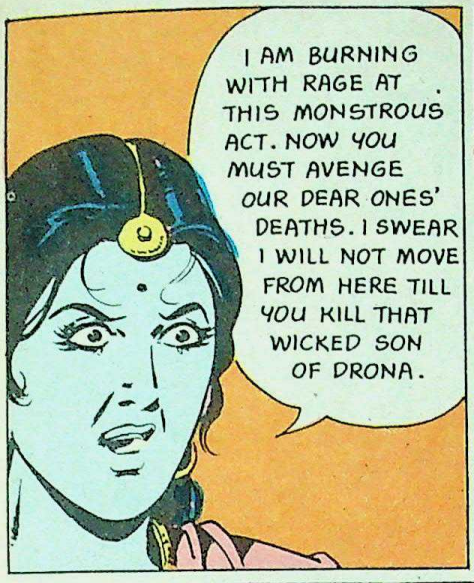

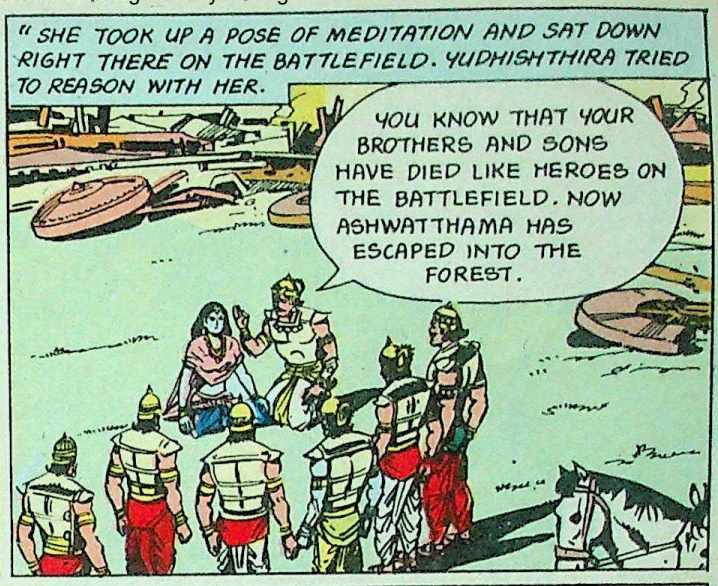

* CELESTIAL WEAPON

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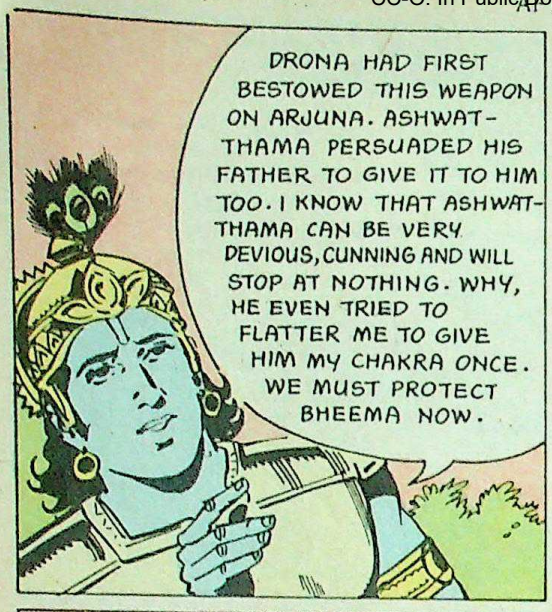

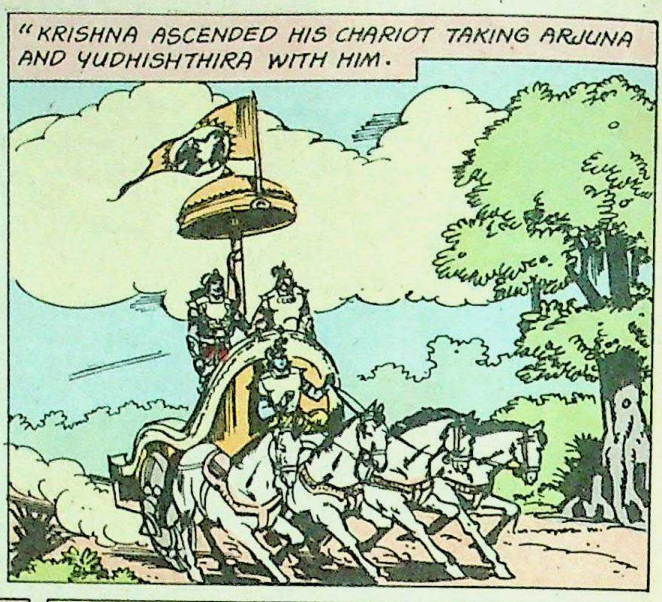

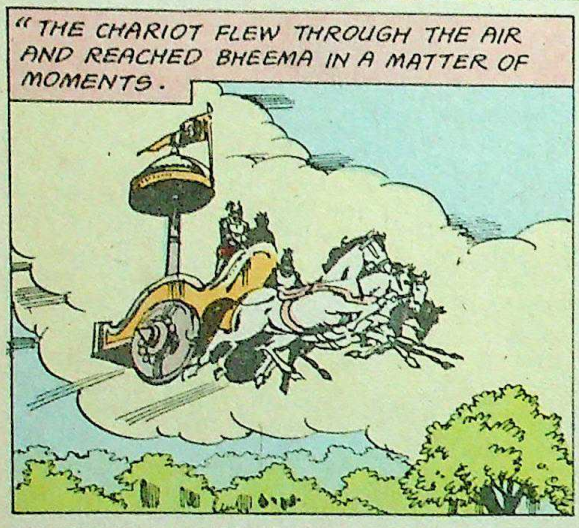

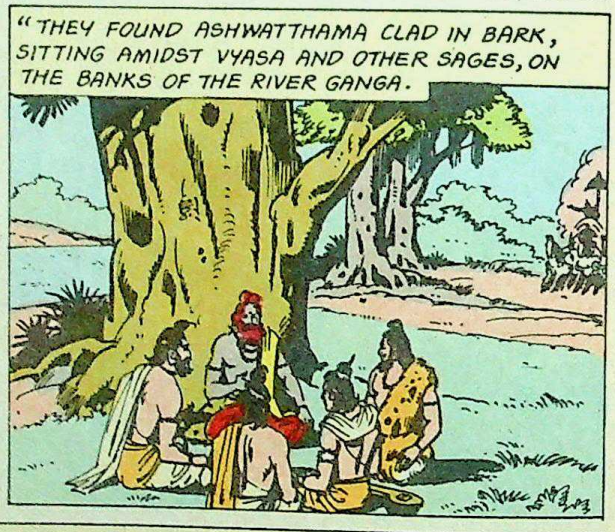

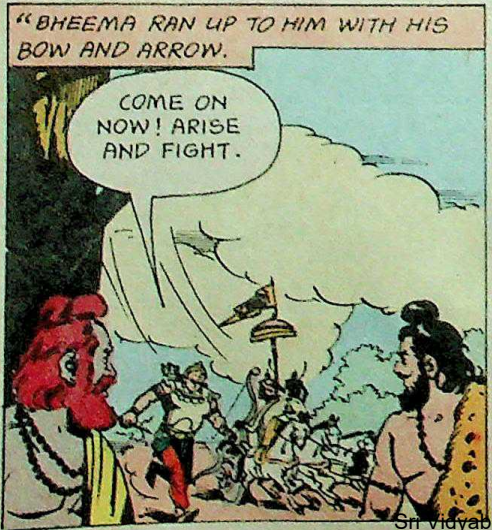

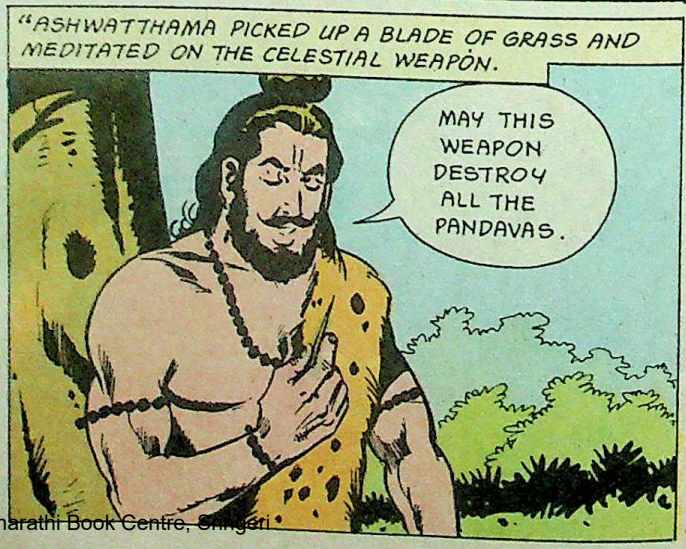

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"NO SOONER HAD HE SAID THIS THAN ENORMOUS FLAMES BEGAN TO EMERGE FROM THAT BLADE OF GRASS.

"KRISHNA HAD READ ASHWATTHAMA'S MIND. HE SAID TO ARJUNA —

YOU TOO RECEIVED THIS WEAPON FROM DRONA. NOW IS THE TIME TO USE IT.

"JUMPING DOWN FROM THE CHARIOT, ARJUNA TOOK UP HIS BOW AND ARROW.

MAY THIS WEAPON COUNTER ASHWATTHAMA'S WEAPON.

"THE ENTIRE WORLD APPEARED TO SHAKE AND TREMBLE WITH THE COMBINED EFFECT OF THE TWO POWERFUL WEAPONS.

"JUST THEN, THE SAGES VYASA AND NARADA, GOT UP AND STOOD BETWEEN ARJUNA AND ASHWATTHAMA.

NO ONE IN THE PAST HAS EVER DARED TO USE THIS WEAPON ON HUMAN BEINGS. HOW COULD BOTH OF YOU DO SO?

"ARJUNA SAID —

I USED IT TO COUNTER ASHWATTHAMA'S ATTACK. NOW I WILL CERTAINLY DO AS YOU SAY. I WILL TRY MY BEST TO RECALL IT.

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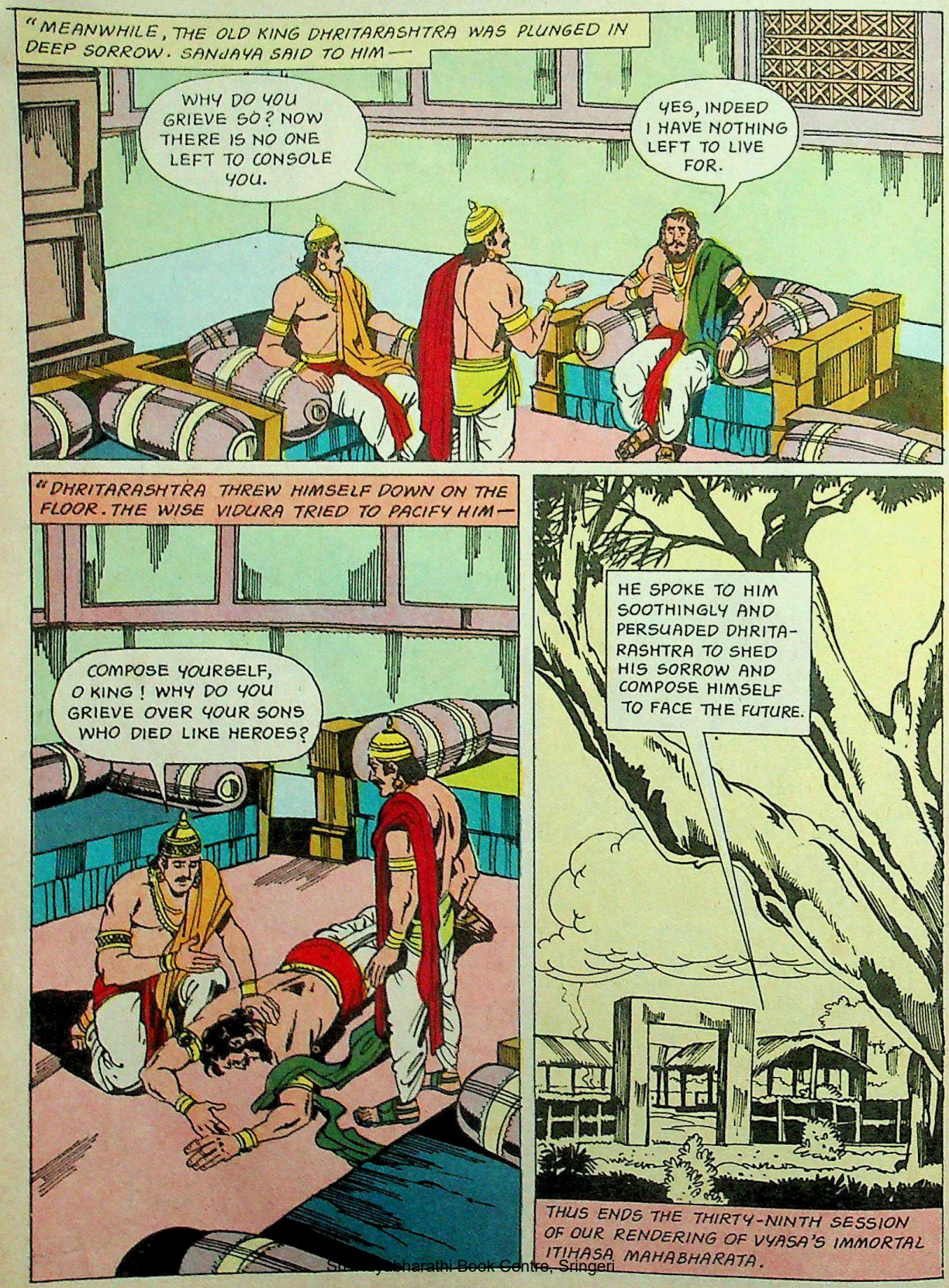

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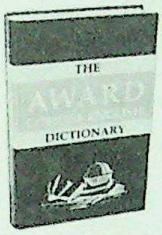

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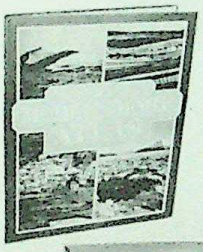

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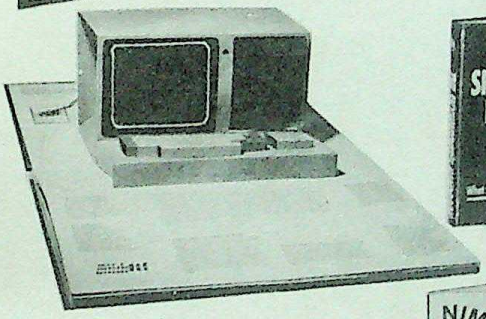

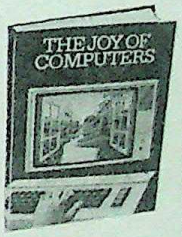

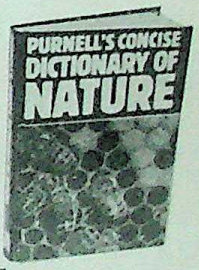

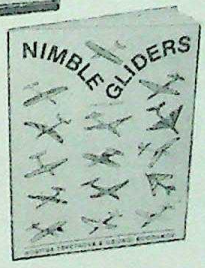

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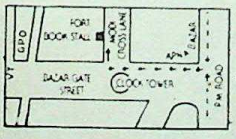

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RAM & SHYAM IN THE TRIBAL EXPERIENCE

PARLE

RAM'S AUNT AND UNCLE LIVE ON A BEAUTIFUL ISLAND. RAM & SHYAM ARE INVITED TO SPEND THE HOLIDAYS WITH THEM.

BEING INQUISITIVE, THEY SET OUT TO EXPLORE THE ISLAND, AS USUAL, MUNCHING POPPINS ON THEIR WAY.

JUST THEN...

ARROWS? BUT WHY?

ZIP! ZIP!

THE TRIBALS MUST BE SCARED OF US.

TO SHOW WE'RE FRIENDS, WE'LL THROW THE ARROW BACK WITH A PACK OF POPPINS ATTACHED TO IT.

LIKE A JAVELIN, SHYAM THROWS THE ARROW WHICH PIERCES A TREE.

SLOWLY, THE TRIBALS COME OUT OF HIDING AND PICK THE PACK OF POPPINS. THEY POP ONE EACH AND SEEM TO LOVE THEM.

WARRAH! WARRAH!

JOYOUS, THEY RUN TO RAM & SHYAM AND HUG THEM IN FRIENDSHIP.

OUR DEAR FRIENDS

WHEN RAM & SHYAM HAVE POPPINS, YOU CAN BE SURE THEY'LL NEVER RUN OUT OF FRIENDS.

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